



Initiatory Aspects in the Gospels (I)

Florin Mihaescu

a. Death and Resurrection

In the discussion that Jesus had with Nicodemus, a well known Pharisee, the first said to the latter: *Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God* (John 3: 3-5). Obviously this is not about a bodily birth, but one into spirit, that is, realized by baptizing. Indeed, soon after this discussion *came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judaea; and there he tarried with them, and baptized* (John 3: 22). Concerning the initiatory character of the original baptize, we will take it into account later on. The birth that Jesus is referring to is possible only after the death of the individuality at the level of the profane life, and man's resurrection, not only purified, but spiritualized, at the level of spiritual life.

Another passage having as subject death and spiritual reborn is found in Jesus' sayings: *Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit* (John 12: 24). Symbolically, Jesus is referring to the death of the corn's exterior skin, so that the inner kernel can flourish. Jesus is much more clear when He says: *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life* (John 5: 24). Here goes that death can be overtaken still in this life, securing soul's rebirth in eternity for those who listen, meaning that they obey and believe, in the sense of identification, Jesus' word as the messenger of the Father (Matthew 16: 28).

The most eloquent example of death and resurrection is that of Jesus himself, who dies in order to resurrect, dies as Son of man in order to resurrect as Son of God.

As I said before, the death for this life, while still being in this life, is a resurrection – a gift that is not for every common believer; because Jesus, after the example with the corn of wheat, says: *He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal* (John. 12: 25). Let us remark that almost all these examples are to be found in John's Gospel considered the most profound and the most symbolic one.

Initiatory Aspects in the Gospels (I)

b. The Chosen Ones (initiatory qualifications)

Like I said, the initiatory path – to die for this life in order to win the other one – is a difficult one, which cannot be followed but only by few people, namely the chosen ones. In the Gospels these few are chosen by Jesus himself, who says *Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you* (John 15:16).

And, indeed, Jesus chooses the 12 Apostles, to whom He said that they were chosen because *Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man* (John 1:51). And later on, He told them *ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel* (Matthew 19:28).

And if Jesus has chosen his 12 Apostles, after the descent of the Holy Ghost, in their turn they chose their own disciples who will spread Christ's teaching. And not only the teaching, but His grace also, which has been transmitted on till this day and till the end of times. *Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven* (Matthew 18:18).

Moreover, among the chosen ones three disciples can be found that are chosen amongst chosen. They are Peter, Jacob and John who witness both the death and the resurrection of the daughter of Jairus and Christ's Transfiguration, the uncreated light, not shown to the others. But, anyway, at the request of Zebedee's sons to sit on the right and the left side of God's throne, Jesus tells them: *to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father* (Matthew 20:23). There is thus a higher level for which fewer are chosen.

A third and much bigger group of the chosen ones includes the 70 disciples. These three groups show the fact that, even among the chosen ones degrees of spirituality can be found, depending on their realization and on the grace received, that is, on the spiritual level attained.

Beside the three groups, Jesus is referring to other chosen ones when He says: *But I tell you of a truth, there be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God* (Luke 9:27). And in any case, to end this subchapter, do not we find in the Scripture: *multi vocati, electi pauci*?